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**Student Voter Registration Day Program Will Reach 20,000 Students
in More Than 60 Schools Citywide on March 18, 2016**

March 15, 2016 – NYC Votes is thrilled to announce the launch of the second-annual [Student Voter Registration Day \(SVRD\)](#) in New York City. Working with Council Member Helen Rosenthal and the City Council, the New York City Department of Education, and the New York Immigration Coalition, the SVRD coalition will encourage more than 20,000 students in more than 60 schools to vote and get involved in civic life. The one-day event will be held on **Friday, March 18**.

By exploring issues like the cost of public colleges, the minimum wage, affordable housing, and the cost of a MetroCard, SVRD helps to connect voting to students' everyday lives and cultivate a culture of engagement among the City's youngest citizens.

The first step in having a say on these issues is registering to vote. SVRD volunteers will help all eligible students register to vote at the end of the program. Students who register to vote on SVRD will be able to vote in New York's presidential primaries on April 19th. The deadline to register to vote in that contest is March 25th. Check your [voter registration status](#) and take a moment to [register to vote](#) today.

Turnout in recent elections highlights the urgency of drawing the next generation of

voters to the polls in 2016. Unfortunately, only 11 percent of registered youth voters (18 to 29 year olds) cast a ballot in the 2013 election for mayor.

The New York Immigration Coalition recruited community based organizations (CBO) to coordinate SVRD programs at each of the participating schools. Volunteers from 38 separate organizations will present the [SVRD curriculum](#) and register eligible students to vote. All students will be asked to take a "[Civic Engagement Pledge.](#)" Student Voter Registration Day started in 2015 as a pilot program led by NYC Votes, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, and the Department of Education. In 2015, more than 2,000 students in 25 schools registered to vote on SVRD.

"New Yorkers will be making critical choices in the 2016 elections that will shape our city and country for decades, so it is imperative that we hear the voices of our youngest voters. I want to thank all of our wonderful partners for making this day possible and for their commitment to empowering our youth voters," said **Onida Coward Mayers**, director of voter assistance at the New York City Campaign Finance Board which runs the NYC Votes campaign.

"Our democracy can only exist when we have informed and active citizens, and that is why we want our students to understand how important voting is and have the knowledge and resources to be informed voters," said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. "Student Voter Registration Day is such a powerful effort to strengthen our City and our democracy, and I thank NYC Votes, the City Council, and the New York Immigration Coalition for their partnership."

"While young voters have the privilege of voting, the challenge for this generation is exercising that right. Every voice matters, and Student Voter Registration Day gives students the opportunity to understand the impact they can make through civic participation – both in and out of the voting booth," said Council Member **Helen Rosenthal**.

Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, said: "We are proud to be a lead partner in the City's Student Voter Registration Day. SVRD doesn't just register students to vote; it engages students in a conversation about the importance of being active members of their community through a comprehensive civics curriculum. In New York City, the vast majority of public school students are either immigrants or the children of immigrants and it is essential that they are engaged. In this critical election year, we need this more than ever. This year's SVRD will involve more than 60 schools, over 40 community partners, and thousands of students. We thank City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Council Member Rosenthal, NYC Campaign Finance Board, and the Department of Education for their hard work to excite New York City's future electorate and empower our city's young people."

"The right to vote is something that no one should take for granted—but far too many New Yorkers don't show up on Election Day. Student Voter Registration Day is a great way to highlight the importance of voter participation while ensuring the next generation

of voters are registered and ready to participate in the upcoming presidential primary,” stated Council Member **Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.**

“We all know that New Yorkers are extremely opinionated. Due to social media, sharing views on candidates and elected officials may be at an all-time high; however, it has become alarmingly clear that very few are making their opinions count in the voting booths. Recent history has shown that New York State ranks nearly dead last in voter turnout in the nation. The time is now to dramatically improve our rank and the young men and women of New York hold the keys to driving us back to the top. Students, please act on your right and make your voice count in 2016 and beyond. Register to vote on March 18th,” said Council Member **Vincent Gentile.**

“Student Voter Registration Day gives young people an opportunity to begin a life time of civic engagement. Your vote is your voice and I encourage all young people to register to vote and make their voices heard. I thank my colleague Council Member Helen Rosenthal for spearheading this effort and all of the students, teachers, and community based organizations participating in today’s event,” said Council Member **Vanessa L. Gibson.**

"Voting is among our most precious rights and most important responsibilities. Today, burdened with student loan debt and facing a long list of crises they will inherit from the previous generation, students have more at stake than ever before. I urge all of them to register and to vote, and I want to commend Council Member Rosenthal for her work organizing this effort," said Council Member **David Greenfield.**

"Encouraging civic engagement in our high school seniors by registering them to vote before they graduate is key to promoting a lifetime of voting," said Council Member **Ben Kallos.** "Getting more New Yorkers to participate in the election process has always been a priority of mine, I am proud to support Council Member Helen Rosenthal in the second year of this important initiative aimed to register more students to vote by establishing a day for it happen. I look forward to improving New York's national ranking in voter turnout from 46th out of 50."

"No matter what side of the political aisle you fall on, it is important that you make your voice heard on election day. More and more young people are registering to vote because they understand this is one of the great privileges of our democracy, and it should not be taken for granted," said Council Member **Peter Koo.**

“In our American democracy there is nothing more important than a citizen's ability to vote for the candidate of their choice. Currently, New York State has one of the lowest voter participation rates of any state in the union; and that must change. That is why I am so pleased to join with my colleagues in supporting Student Voter Registration Day; an initiative which encourages our youth not only to vote, but also shows them the importance and necessity of doing so. SVRD is a program that not only enrolls new student voters, but also stresses the importance of becoming more educated about candidates and ballot issues as well as promoting involvement in local civic activities. I

am very proud to support this effort," declared NYC Council Member **Karen Koslowitz**.

"With New York's voting rate consistently among the lowest in the country, Student Voter Registration Day is an important opportunity to get people ready to vote. I'm excited to visit schools in my district and encourage our newest voters to be active participants in our democracy," said Council Member **Rory Lancman**.

"It is such an honor to bring Student Voter Registration Day back to District 31 this year to ensure that our high school students have the opportunity to register for this year's Presidential primaries. Getting our youth engaged in the voting process is one of the best ways to build up our communities for the future. I'd like to thank Council Member Rosenthal for spearheading this program in the Council and bringing this opportunity to thousands of students across the city," said Council Member **Donovan Richards**.

"Throughout our nation's history, countless people have given their lives in the fight to expand access to the polls. As we continue this struggle even today, it saddens me to see so few young people exercising their right to vote. From gun violence to health care access, from campus sexual assault to student debt, elected officials shape the lives of young people in so many ways. The best way to honor the sacrifices of those who came before us and address the pressing needs of young people and their communities is to exercise the right to vote. A true, healthy democracy includes the voices of all, and I am proud to join my colleagues in calling on New York City teachers to discuss in the classroom the value of civic engagement and give students the opportunity to register to vote," said Council Member **Debi Rose**.

"Our future depends on young people stepping up and making sure their voices are heard. While you may not think so, every vote matters which is why I'm encouraging all students as well as everyone else to register and vote," said Council Member **Rafael Salamanca, Jr.**

"Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy and I encourage all citizens to register in order to fulfill their civic duty. Student Voter Registration Day is an important event because we focus our attention on empowering young people who are eligible to vote for the first time. With the Presidential election right around the corner, it is especially critical that everyone who is eligible to vote does so. In my district, I will be partnering with Lehman High School in order to spread the word and get people registered," said Council Member **James Vacca**.

"Civic participation is a habit best begun early. NYPIRG is excited to engage scores of students by registering them to vote and connecting youth across New York City to democracy on the second annual Student Voter Registration Day," said **Megan Ahearn**, NYPIRG Program Director.

"Atlas:DIY is so excited to be a part of Student Voter Registration Day! As an organization serving and working alongside immigrant youth in all five boroughs, this initiative goes beyond voting and engages young people in what is happening in their

communities. SVRD is about sparking the belief that young people can make a change and illustrating that their voices matter," said **Michelina Ferrara**, Deputy Director, Atlas:DIY

"The Black Institute is excited to celebrate the voting experience with young people in our city. Registering to vote is just the first step in civic engagement. America is changing everyday and young people must participate to be heard. We look forward to participating in one of the largest youth voter registration efforts. Student Voter Registration Day brings civics back into the classroom with a humanistic and engaging approach," said **Bertha Lewis**, Founder and President, The Black Institute.

"SVRD is an important initiative that reaches students of voting age to register to vote in their schools and become civically engaged. SVRD also provides an avenue for students who cannot vote a pathway to become engaged in their communities through participatory budgeting and community boards. We are happy to partner on this initiative in three high schools on Staten Island," said **Gonzalo Mercado**, Executive Director, Staten Island Community Job Center.

"For the past 15 years, the Arab American Association of New York has been dedicated to building the political power of the Arab American community in New York through voter registration and voter engagement. We are delighted at the opportunity to register the next generation of voters on Student Voter Registration Day at Fort Hamilton High School, located in the district with the largest population of Arab Americans in New York. Engaging Arab American youth in the civic process is an integral part of our work to ensure that our voices are heard on the issues that matter to us most," said **Linda Sarsour**, Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York.

"New Yorkers between the ages of 18 and 30 have the lowest voter registration and voter turnout rates, and the Asian community lags behind other groups in their rates as well. The MinKwon Center is proud to be participating in this year's Student Voter Registration Day to engage, empower, and encourage students to participate in the democratic process and raise their voices. The ability to vote is a critical part of any community's power to effect positive change," said **Grace Shim**, Executive Director of the MinKwon Center for Community Action.

Nkosi Nkululeko, the 2016 NYC Youth Poet Laureate, said: "We all were young once, playing outside the room where the old folk did their "grown up talk." It was gibberish to us back then, now we can call it rhetoric, political conversation. At this age, it is important to be let inside the room. Student Voter Registration Day is an important moment, a moment when the youth can be informed of their power, their ability to influence their surroundings."

Participating Organizations

Arab American Association of New York
Atlas: DIY
Black Institute

Latin Women in Action
Latino Leadership Institute
League of Women Voters

Participating Organizations

BridgeRoots	MinKwon Center for Community Action
Center for Family Life	NAACP Brooklyn
Chhaya CDC	NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch
Chinese Progressive Association	NW Bronx Community and Clergy
Christopher Rose Community Empowerment Campaign	NY Immigration Coalition
CIANA	NYPIRG
Citizens Action	NYU Lutheran Family Health Center
Common Cause	Omega Phi Beta
Dominicanos USA	Pearls & Ivy
Empowerment Zone	Phipps Neighborhoods, Inc.
Friends of Art & Design	SI CJC
Gathering for Justice	South Asians for Empowerment
Generation Citizen	Street Corner Resources
Good Old Lower East Side	The Greater Ridgewood Youth Council
Immigrant Action	United Chinese Association of Brooklyn
Indo-Caribbean Alliance	University Settlement

Join the conversation on SVRD 2016 on social media using the hashtag **#YouthVoteNYC**.